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ABSTRACT

This paper, written in outline form, summarizes the history and current situation of special education in China. The paper begins by listing milestones in Chinese special education from 200 B.C. to 1990 A.D. and noting that currently there are an estimated 6,500,000 children (ages 7-15, with disabilities, of whom 70,000 are being served in special classes and special schools. Contemporary legislation pertaining to special education are noted, followed by a description of current education practices in the areas of regular education, special schools, higher education, and inservice teacher training. Current examples of educational research are also described, including experiments in service delivery options (such as mainstreaming), early intervention and education, and parent/school collaboration. Activities in the areas of international exchange are briefly noted. Major problems identified include the following: (1) low school attendance rate by children with disabilities, (2) large regional variances in school attendance, (3) limited vocational training options, and (4) shortage of teachers. Concluding the paper is an outline of future directions, including popularized compulsory education for children with disabilities, new secondary and vocational education, new special education categories, and improved levels of teaching and research. (Contains 10 references.) (DB)

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CHINA'S SPECIAL EDUCATION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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HISTORY

200 BC. The Liyuen section of the Confucian classic, Liji, suggested support for orphans, elders, and handicapped. This reflected the belief that a successful culture was inclusive.

1859. Hong Renxuan, a farmer leader of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom (to be a new country in China which had been weakened by the Opium Wars), asked for schools for blind, deaf, and crippled.

1874. Missionaries came to establish schools for students who were blind or deaf. Moon William, a British minister, founded the first school for blind in Beijing.

1887. Mr. and Mrs. Mills, Americans, established first school for deaf in the Shandong Province. A number of private schools for deaf and blind subsequently were established.

1949. The People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded. There were 42 schools (2,000 students) for the blind, deaf and nonverbal. Government took over missionary special schools. Measures were taken to: set goals, modify content, reform teaching materials, form national committees, and include special education in the national education system.

1959. Influenced by Russians, Dalian established a special school for the mentally retarded. It lasted 4 years and enrolled 67.

1965. There were 22, 850 blind and deaf students in 266 schools by 1965.

1966 -1976. Miracles using folk medicine were reported in special schools which demonstrated humanism by ordinary citizens during Cultural Revolution.

1975. There were 26,782 students in 246 schools by 1975.

1978. The "Reform and Open Policy" was established. Before 1980, special schools began to include mentally retarded students.

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1979. Teachers went to observe an experimental class for mentally retarded students in a Shanghai School for Deaf. Beijing Normal University expanded teacher education. World reports were read. Foreign visitors asked about special education. Numerous steps were taken to facilitate the development of special education at all levels of government.

1986. Mainstreaming experiments included visually impaired, hearing impaired, and mentally retarded students. Initiated by the Department of Special Education, State Education Commission and the Division of Special Education, Central China Educational Institute, over 12 provinces participated in the experiments. Positive experiences helped spread mainstreaming.

1990. More than 70, 000 students were enrolled in 1053 special classes and 746 special schools: 25 schools for blind, 50 schools for blind-deaf, 480 schools for deaf, and 191 schools for mentally retarded students. Services had been broadened to include: residential, self-contained classes in special schools, self-contained classes in regular schools, and enrollment in regular classes (mainstream).

It was recently estimated that China had 51,640,000 handicapped persons including: visually impaired, hearing impaired, mentally retarded, physically disabled, mentally ill, and multiply handicapped (Piao, 1991). Of these, the school aged were:

Ages 0-14: 8,170,000
- 5, 390, 000 mentally retarded
- 1,160,000 speech and hearing impaired
- 180,000 visually impaired
- 620,000 physically disabled
- 14,000 mentally ill
- 806,000 multiply disabled

Ages 7-15 : 6,500,000

CONTEMPORARY LEGISLATION

December 4, **1982**, Article 45 of the Constitution of PRC was adopted. It supported services for the blind, deaf, nonverbal and other handicapped citizens.

Article 9, Compulsory Education Law of PRC, April 12, **1986**, said local governments should establish schools with special classes for blind, deaf, and mentally retarded. This 1986 law was the first time that special education was included in compulsory education to protect rights of disabled to receive education from local education agencies. Private philanthropic groups and welfare enterprises continued to provide support for certain special education programs, but the government became the major provider following the1986 law. It eliminated the choice of whether or not special education was provided on a local basis.

On December 28, **1990**, the Protection of Handicapped Persons Law was passed. It declared that disabled persons had equal rights with other citizens in politics, economy, culture, society, and family. Citizen rights and personal dignity of disabled persons were protected by the national law. Government sponsored education at all levels was admonished to take leadership in the integration of special education for the disabled persons into the national education system. The legislation on special education reflected a determination on the part of the government to insure further and greater development of special education.

EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

Regular Education

Many children in urban areas are sent to a nursery school. If the both parents are working and there is not a caretaker available they may go to nursery school as young as two months of age. Generally, they are from one to two years of age before they start. Kindergarten begins at about age three. Nursery schools and kindergartens are supported by work units.

Children begin elementary school at 6 years of age. After 6 years in elementary school, students enter a 6 year high school. The six years of high school are divided into two equal parts: junior and senior high school. After completing three years of junior high school, students go to: (1) special high school or (2) senior high school. Special high school means a vocational training school, such as travel school, technical school, cooking school, or teacher training school. Senior high school graduates take an annual national examination to enter a college or a university. Admission mainly depends on the national examination score.

Special Schools

A typical nine year curriculum for mentally retarded students includes the following subjects: (1) Daily Knowledge, (2) Chinese Language, (3) Mathematics, (4) Physical Education, (5) Music, (6) Art, (7) Living Skills, and (8) Organized Activities.

Subjects for the six year elementary curriculum for deaf students are similar to those for mentally retarded, but moral training, speech, and vocational training are emphasized more for deaf students. Middle school for deaf students lasts for three years.

There are two configurations of primary and middle school combinations for blind students: (1) five years of primary school plus four years of middle school and (2) six years of primary school plus three years of middle school. The general curriculum outline for students in the special schools for the blind contains twelve areas. In addition to the subjects for the deaf and mentally retarded, blind students are taught Braille, natural and social science, manual skills, and adaptive skills.

Higher Education

University baccalaureate degree programs take four years. A college program to receive a certificate takes less than four years. Medical training takes longer. Formal teacher training in special education is done at normal universities or middle normal schools.

Four universities offer a special education major: Beijing Normal University, Beijing; East China Normal University, Shanghai; Middle China Normal University, Wuhan; and Southwest Normal University, ChongQing. University graduates become administrators, researchers, or teachers in middle teacher schools. Graduates of middle special education teacher training schools become teachers in primary special schools.

Inservice

By 1990, 21 special education normal schools and centers for special teacher training had been established. In service (on the job) training is divided into two groups: (1) training in normal universities or middle normal schools and (2) training in special schools. Normal universities or normal schools often have short personnel training programs for special education teachers. Trainees usually are given temporary leave from their jobs to become full time students.

On the job training in special schools includes: observing and learning from a mentor, practice teaching, and discussions. Qingdao has one "special education day" per week to discuss improvement of teaching skills.

CURRENT RESEARCH EXAMPLES

Service Delivery Options

A "Gold-key Education Plan" in which 1,000 blind children were integrated into regular classes was headed by Mr. Bairun Xu in 1987. It was extended into the whole country.

In the Shandong Province they are experimenting with resource room placements, IEPs, and integration of mild mentally retarded children into regular classes in all cities, resulting in an increased enrollment rate for mentally retarded children.

Regardless of the severity of hearing or visual loss, students had been grouped in the same classroom. Most special schools now group deaf students separately from hard-of-hearing and visually impaired children separately from blind. Big-character Chinese materials are used for low vision children and acoustical training is used with hearing impaired children.

Early Intervention and Education

In the early 1980s, the Gesell Developmental Schedule and the Denver Developmental Screening Test were translated and revised in China to identify at-risk infants and children. Recently, the Draw-a-Person Test was revised by the Beijing Capitol Children's Development Institute (a leader in early intervention) to identify mentally retarded young children.

A great number of child care centers and kindergartens across the country have begun offering intervention programs for handicapped infants and young children. In 1990, over 600 preschool classes were founded for handicapped children. The "three rehabilitation programs" of 1988-1992 hoped to provide hearing language training for 30,000 hearing-impaired children between 3-7 years of age. By 1991, more than 700 language training centers had been established and 10,000 children with hearing impairment had been trained.

Parents and School Collaboration

1. Parent committees: selected parents are organized into a committee for a grade or a school to provide: school-work planning, information to parents, and parents' suggestions to the school.

2. Parent school: schools hold training programs for parents of disabled children at night or weekends. Parents ideas are exchanged with teachers.

3. Visits: parents visit school and teachers visit parents.

4. Bag letter: information about the child in school and at home is exchanged through letters carried in the student's school bag every day.

5. Information exchange. Newsletters, journals, and monographs provide parents with information about specific disabilities, experiences of treating children, events happening in school, and requirements from the school.

INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

Experts and professionals on special education from overseas have often been invited to China for visiting, lecturing, and guiding the development of special education. Special education delegations have been sent to other countries to learn about advanced approaches and to participate in international conferences. Graduate students and visiting scholars have been dispatched abroad to study special education.

In June 1988, more than 600 representatives from over 20 countries and regions participated in an international conference on special education in Beijing. Jerri Ueberle, President of the Division of International Special Education (DISES), CEC, 1992 - 1993, was a coordinator.

UNICEF has provided: assistance for developing special education normal schools, research on early intervention and identification, prevalence studies, and program demonstration.

From 1988 to 1992, Global 2000, Carter Presidential Center, held 9 personnel training programs on visual impairment, hearing impairment, mental retardation, early intervention, and special education administration. Virginia Dixon, President Elect of DISES-CEC, was an instructor in two of the programs for training special education administrators.

German and British foundations have contributed to the education of the visually impaired through through the support of teacher training, publishing Braille-reading materials, and importing advanced instruments for the blind.

MAJOR PROBLEMS

Although special education in China has developed rapidly, many problems need to be addressed. The following four may be the most pressing.

1. Low attendance rate. By 1992, 97.95% of children of primary school age were in school. However, most children with disabilities, especially those in rural and remote areas hardly had opportunities to go to school. By 1992, less than 20% of children with visual impairment and hearing impairment went to school. The rate of mentally retarded children going to school was far lower than that for the blind and deaf. China's compulsory education law has yet to be implemented for children with disabilities.

2. Regional variance. The increasing rate of children with disabilities going to school is limited to only 7 or 8 of 30 provinces.

3. Vocational training. Most of training courses are at a low level and limited to a few careers. In special schools for blind students, the vocational courses are chiefly limited to massage and weaving. In schools for the deaf, the vocational courses are limited to carpentry, sewing, typing, printing, metalworking, and art design.

4. Shortage of teachers: 388,000 special education teachers will be needed by year 2000: 40,000 teachers each year. But, only 3000 will graduate from special teacher training institutes and fewer than 100 special education majors graduate from universities per year.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Popularized compulsory education for disabled children. The current five year program (1991-1995) said that disabled children who were capable of receiving ordinary education should reach the level as those children without disabilities. To reach this goal, the government plans to establish and implement more legislation on special education.

New secondary and vocational education. Physically disabled students attend Shandong Binzhou Medical University to receive medical training. Changchun University has established an Art Department for persons with visual, hearing, and physical disabilities. Special middle schools and universities have begun to enroll disabled youth.

Predictions. Middle school, college, and vocational education for the disabled will gain attention. Experimental high schools for students with visually or hearing impairment hearing impaired will be established. A number of vocational technical schools will be founded. Emphasis will be placed on vocational training for the disabled according to local need and local economy development. A college for the disabled, now being planned, will be built.

New special education categories. The categories of special education in China are now restricted to: visual impairment, hearing impairment, language disorders, and mild mental retardation. Being considered are: learning disabilities, moderate mental retardation, and multiple handicaps. Eventually, such children will receive appropriate education.

Improving the level of teaching and research. Improving the level of teaching and research has become an urgent need for special education development. The government is encouraging research institutions and special schools to develop new methods, materials, curricula, and teacher training programs. Professionals in medicine, psychology, and sociology hope to become involved with special educators to create new models of: medical treatment, rehabilitation, education, research, and training for persons with disabilities.

We hope special educators from around the world can find a way to join the endeavor to provide appropriate education for all students in China.

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ABSTRACT
CHINA'S SPECIAL EDUCATION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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In 200 BC, philosophers wrote about a concern for disabled. The arrival of missionaries brought institutions for blind and deaf in the late 1980s. The first soviet influenced classes for mentally retarded finally emerged in the early 1980s to mark the development of modern special education in China. The very modern Protection of Handicapped Persons Law was passed in 1990.

Many children in urban areas are sent to a nursery school. Children begin elementary school at 6 years of age. After 6 years in elementary school, students enter a 6 year high school. The six years of high school are divided into two equal parts: junior and senior high school. After completing three years of junior high school, students go to: (1) special high school or (2) senior high school. Special high school means a vocational training school, such as travel school, technical school, cooking school, or teacher training school (as in Special Education Middle Schools for special education teachers).

Subjects for the six year elementary curriculum for deaf students cover many of those taken by regular students, while mentally retarded students follow a nine year curriculum and blind students may have one of two configurations of primary and middle school combinations. The Ministry of Civil Affairs has organized many community based child development, education, and vocational programs.

Special teacher training is conducted at special middle schools, universities, and in special inservice workshops. Research and demonstration programs are being conducted by universities, provincial education commissions, and city schools. Projects have included the placement of blind children into regular classes and the integration of mild mentally retarded children into regular classes in the city schools of the Shandong Province which resulted in an increased enrollment rate for mentally retarded children. National education commission and university programs have been active in international exchange.

Parent activism is new. Parents are encouraged to participate in special education through special training classes and regular home to school communication. Some parents have started private special schools.

Some of the major problems which have developed have been severe teacher shortage, very limited program development in certain regions of China, and a lack of appropriate vocational opportunities. It is anticipated that teacher training programs will grow, new classifications of disabilities will be adopted, and research based demonstration projects will soon reach most areas of China.